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HEADLINE: Interview With Hasan Abdel Rahman

GUESTS: Hasan Abdel Rahman

BYLINE: Martin Savidge

HIGHLIGHT:

Hasan Abdel Rahman, chief PLO representative to the U.S., discusses the recent rash of bombings in Israel, and what he believes will allow both sides in the conflict to resolve the situation peacefully.

BODY:

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MARTIN SAVIDGE, CNN ANCHOR: We are joined now by **Hasan Abdel Rahman**, the PLO representative to the United States. He joins us from New York.

Thank you, sir, for being with us this morning.

HASAN ABDEL RAHMAN, CHIEF PLO REPRESENTATIVE TO U.S.: Thank you, sir.

SAVIDGE: I'd like to hear in your own words your reaction to these developments, the terrorist attacks in Israel over the past 24 hours.

RAHMAN: Let me reiterate the position of the **Palestinian Authority**. We condemn those acts. We oppose them, and we will do everything we can to stop them.

But for our effort to succeed, Israel must stop its assassination of Palestinian leaders. It must stop demolishing of Palestinian homes, killing of Palestinian civilians. Like yesterday, two children were killed, one 11 and one 18. Israel must stop building settlements.

Israel, in other words, have to help us create the right environment...

SAVIDGE: Sir.

RAHMAN: ... so we can succeed in our effort. Because...

SAVIDGE: When you have these issues though, on top of making your statement of condemnation, it sounds like it is almost justified in some sense on the part of the PLO and those terrorists that carry out the attacks.

RAHMAN: No, we are not justifying them. But we are trying to present the conditions under which those

incidents, those terrorist acts take place. You cannot separate them from the environment that has been created by Israel over the last 35 years of occupation and has been intensifying in the last 14 months.

Remember that over 1,000 Palestinians have been killed, over 20,000 have been wounded, 500 homes have been demolished. Israel is engaged in Mafia-style execution of Palestinian leaders. Those are the...

SAVIDGE: But the cycle of violence continues, sir, on both sides. If you want peace, if there is to be an end to bloodshed, doesn't it require both sides to end their campaigns, and in this case you are the PLO?

RAHMAN: Absolutely right. Yes, you are absolutely right, and that's why we are saying to the Israelis "you and us should do simultaneous and reciprocate steps." But for Israel to put the blame totally and squarely on the **Palestinian Authority** is not helpful. Israel must look at its actions. It must change its behaviors. It has to recognize that the Palestinian people are also human beings, and their rights should be respected.

Israel is imposing a state of siege on the Palestinian territories for the last 14 months. There are 50 percent unemployment in the Palestinian territories...

SAVIDGE: Let me interrupt you just for the moment, because time is short and issues are important here.

RAHMAN: Yes.

SAVIDGE: The Israeli Government and the U.S. is demanding that massive action be taken on the part of the Palestinian Liberation Organization. In other words, massive arrests. Are you willing to carry that out?

RAHMAN: What we are saying, that we will do everything that we can. And I repeat, "everything that we can." But we cannot do everything unless Israel can help us and we can work with Israel. And Israel can help us by changing its behavior. That's what I'm trying to make -- this is the point I'm trying to make...

SAVIDGE: But aren't we teetering on the brink of war? We can debate the past 35 years, but at the moment it appears that you are teetering on the brink of war between Israel and the Palestinians, and certainly no one would want that.

RAHMAN: But Israel has been waging a war against the Palestinians for the last 14 months. Therefore, there's nothing new in this. What we need is to change the situation and reverse it. And by reversing it, we need Israel to change its behavior so we can do the things that we need to do.

SAVIDGE: Why would Israel change its behavior in light of the fact that so many of their people are dead this morning?

RAHMAN: But so many of our people have been killed too. In the last -- only in the last two weeks, 160 Palestinians have been killed.

SAVIDGE: But that is my point. Two sides, both have many dead, and yet the killing goes on.

RAHMAN: What I'm trying to say, sir, that we will do our utmost. But we need Israel to understand that there are requirements, also, from Israel. And they should do them simultaneously, so we can succeed in our effort.

We are willing to cooperate with General Zinni. We want a cease- fire. We want to reverse this cycle of violence. But Israel needs to understand that there has to be a change in its behavior towards the Palestinians.

SAVIDGE: We will end it there. Thank you very much.

RAHMAN: Thank you, sir.

SAVIDGE: **Hasan Abdel Rahman**. He is the representative of the PLO to the United Nations. Thank you. TO ORDER A VIDEO OF THIS TRANSCRIPT, PLEASE CALL 800-CNN-NEWS OR USE OUR SECURE ONLINE ORDER FORM LOCATED AT <http://www.fdch.com/>

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